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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PRT ASADABAD: KUNAR POLICE FRUSTRATED AS FIGHTING SEASON  
LOOMS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Frustration among provincial police chiefs boiled over at an eastern region governors' conference in late March, as Kunar Brigadier Abdul Jalal declared that he was under-staffed and under-resourced. Jalal also asserted that the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has yet to release a now overdue staffing plan for the year, leaving the police confused about which year's employment schedule to follow. (Note: The staffing plan was finally approved April 14.) Auxiliary police, who make up over half the force in Kunar, continue to train to qualify for regular police positions, which they must do by October 1, when the auxiliary program ends. To date, however, no such graduates have moved over to regular police positions, and many auxiliary contracts will expire within one month. Jalal also claims that the police are too lightly equipped to fight heavy-weapon-toting insurgents who attack roadside checkpoints.

Lack of Personnel

¶2. (SBU) Three police checkpoints along the Pech Valley road were blown up in February. Residents credited two of the incidents to insurgents, and the third to a land dispute. In the aftermath, Governor Wahidi accused Jalal's district police chiefs of failing to man the checkpoints. At least one of the sites was reportedly empty when destroyed. (The PRT suspects that insurgents told police to vacate the premises "or die," or that police had information of an imminent attack.) After performing random spot-checks and finding more unmanned stations, Wahidi increased pressure on Jalal. However, the Governor's weekly denouncements of police ineptitude at security meetings have only served to shame Jalal in a public forum and evoked little response.

¶3. (SBU) Jalal, scrambling to save face amid accusations of ineffectiveness, called in district chiefs to criticize their performance. He stated that every time a police checkpoint is intimidated, overrun, or blown up, it sends a message to the local population that the police are weak or unwilling, a theme that insurgent propaganda exploits. Jalal emphasized, however, that the police force's biggest problem is personnel numbers, not resolve.

¶4. (SBU) Jalal pointed to Watapur district in the Pech River valley, which has been allocated 180 police positions, of which only 71 are currently filled. Jalal asserts that with these numbers and limited force protection features it is unreasonable to expect that police will stay overnight in regularly-attacked positions.

## Training Status

15. (SBU) None of Kunar's 14 districts (five of which form a 260-km border with Pakistan's Chitral settled area and Bajaur and Mohmand tribal areas) has been publicly designated for Focused District Development in 2008 or 2009. As a result, a U.S. Military Police unit, DynCorp police mentors contracted to DOS/INL, and the Police Mentoring and Training team are partnering to provide "immersion training" in each district. These mixed civil-military teams go to one district for 30 consecutive days to retrain police as a unit. The plan was somewhat successful in Chowkay, a southern district on the west side of the Kunar River. But in that district, the Provincial Reconstruction Team's contractor responsible for the 32-km Chowkay valley road project reported that police refused to venture more than two kilometers into the valley from the Jalalabad-Asmar paved road. Immersion training is now ongoing in Narang district, also south of Asadabad.

16. (SBU) Kunar is authorized 800 auxiliary police, of which 771 are currently on the books. Mentors estimate that actual numbers are as low as 670. Auxiliary training is 22 percent complete, but rollovers to the regular police have not begun, and Brigadier Jalal does not yet know how many of the 800 auxiliary positions will become regular police slots in next year's staffing allocation. Many of Kunar's auxiliaries signed on at the beginning of the last Afghan year (1386) and their contracts are about to expire. If their contracts end before they finish training, Kunar could face a drastic reduction in available police personnel.

17. (SBU) Two Afghan National Army battalions reinforced both the Pech River valley and the area east of the Kunar River in February. This, combined with a border police recruitment campaign, has

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alleviated some of the pressure on regular police to man remote positions, particularly in the eastern districts of Sarkani and Khas Kunar. With up to 700 Afghan Border Police trainees scheduled to deploy from the district of Kamdesh, Nuristan Province, south to Khas Kunar in the next two months, Governor Wahidi has asked Jalal to have police fall back to main roadways and create 100 percent-check traffic control points. While supportive of the idea, Jalal has been noncommittal, saying his staff is already spread too thin.

18. (SBU) There is a perception among provincial leadership that the Ministry of Interior staffing plan fails to account for threat and allocates positions and equipment based only on population. (Note: Planners for the new police staffing patterns utilized a formula that included both population and threat assessments to allocate police positions by district.) Jalal does not appear to be dodging responsibility for manning of police posts in the province, but is voicing legitimate frustration over his ability to recruit, retain, and rollover patrolmen into the force. The PRT expects the increased army and border police presence to mitigate the usual uptick in insurgent activity due to warming weather, but regular police are neither confident nor optimistic about their ability to interdict insurgent traffic on main roads.

WOOD